

FALL
2004



The FLAP

News for the Folks of Lake Accotink Park

703-569-3464 www.lakeaccotinkpark.com



Mission Impossible?

"To set aside public spaces for and assist citizens in the protection and enhancement of environmental values, diversity of natural habitats and cultural heritage to guarantee that these resources will be available to both present and future generations. To create and sustain quality facilities and services which offer citizens opportunities for recreation, improvement of their physical and mental well being, and enhancement of their quality of life."

This is the mission with which the Fairfax County Park Authority is charged. It is a simplistic, yet ambitious mission statement that each park takes very seriously. It can be difficult to balance both sides of the mission, to balance the desire for recreational pursuits with the ability to preserve and protect natural areas. Lake Accotink Park is striving to fulfill both aspects equally well.

Lake Accotink Park is categorized as a lakefront recreational park for management purposes. Its recreational attributes are what come to the fore of many people's minds when they think about this park. It produces images of hiking and biking, boating and miniature golf, picnics and watching the sunset. However, Lake Accotink Park is also significant to local cultural history and biodiversity. For this

reason, park management has increasingly sought to fulfill both aspects of the Park Authority's mission by producing programs to enhance environmental values and stewardship of cultural and natural resources. One aspect is the Witness to History exhibit, which highlights the role of what is now the parkland in local history from the time of Native American dominance in the region through when the land was owned by the federal government and served as a water source for Fort Belvoir.



Barred owls need wet, swampy forests, like Lake Accotink Park, to hunt for frogs, rodents, and crayfish.

This exhibit at the main office, two historical markers, a brochure, interpretive signage and the boat tour of the lake help to promote the idea that local history is significant and reflects larger national historic themes. History happened along the Accotink Creek, not just along Bull Run or the Mississippi

River. With cultural interpretive efforts firmly underway, park staff has focused more time and energy on interpreting the park's natural resources.

Interpretive information has been added to the animal case at the main office. Tentatively entitled "Don't Tread on Me," this exhibit seeks to explore the importance of Lake Accotink Park's role in the community as well as its importance to local biodiversity. Lake Accotink Park not only provides a much needed escape from the pressures of daily life for area residents (thus fulfilling a significant portion of the Park Authority's mission statement), but it also provides one of the few habitats safe from increasing urbanization and industrialization for wildlife. The exhibit will feature changing displays relevant to these themes which showcase a variety of specimens. All specimens were found in Lake Accotink Park or its environs. Most were collected by the park's amateur naturalist who began collecting them and readying them for exhibit purposes. Currently the case spotlights the amazing diversity of insects found in the park, the role snakes play in ecosystems

(continued on page 4)

Summer 2004 Marina Cup Competition:

Lake Accotink Park's Summer Training Program

It's a bird! It's a plane! No...it's a marina staff person! A lot is demanded of Lake Accotink Park's summer staff. They are customer service representatives, they are stewards of the park grounds and facilities, they are food service specialists,

they run programs and are public servants and, at times, they are first responders in emergency situations. Sometimes, they are all of these things in one day. There is much special knowledge and many skills required to do well. What do

you do if the register/computer freezes? When is it time to put on more hot dogs? What happens if a tour boat gets stuck? Is that thunder? Now everyone needs to be off the water. How does one learn all of this? The

(Continued on page 2)

Check out the center insert for Lake Accotink Park's exciting fall classes. Register today!

Did you know the Witness to History exhibit includes aerial photography showing the growth of Springfield from the 1940s through the present? Stop by the main office and see if you can find your house!

(Summer 2004 Marina Cup continued from Page 1)

answer is two-fold. Lake Accotink Park was again fortunate to attract a hardworking, talented staff. And this year, the park began a training program to ensure all staff learned these skills as well as the ins and outs of the job through a series of "events" and meetings which teamed members who have worked here for several summers with those who are just beginning their tenure here.

Since the end of April staff members have committed their time on Wednesday or Thursday evenings to participate in these "events," which became known collectively as the Summer 2004 Marina Cup Competition, designed to teach and

test various aspects of their multi-faceted jobs and to help staff put forth high quality customer service. The staff was divided into teams which competed for points in these "events" while discussing challenges faced on the job and strategies for dealing with them. The competition included such exciting events as Tour Boat Memory and Password, which tested knowledge of the tour boat script and of the park's cultural history; Safety Bingo, which discussed among other things blood borne pathogens and how to control their spread; and role playing activities which drilled preparedness for emergency situations and first aid.

Both teams did very well and were enthusiastic and sportsperson-like

throughout the program, which ended in mid-August. Lake Accotink Park appreciates all of the hard work they put into the trainings and during their shifts. The following staff is recognized as members of the winning team:

David Churchwell, Chrissy Faith, James Freeze, Eric Hickey, Jesse Koch, Jeff Lopez*, Tim Moore*, Keely Pate*, Maggie Seegers*, and Matt Tucker

(*These individuals also received attendance recognition as well as Lauren Angwin, Becky Pierce, Antonio Vega and Paul Waiter.)

Congratulations to everyone!



Check-It-Out:

Catch up with the new and exciting things going on at Lake Accotink Park!

Have you heard... Lake Accotink Park's Night Guard and Evening Supervisor, Axel Boy, will be awarded a Customer Choice award by the Fairfax County Park Authority's Trailblazer awards program on September 14th. The Customer Choice award is given to two Park Authority employees every year whose friendly and positive attitudes have been morale boosters for staff and patrons, who willingly complete tasks outside their job description and support other staff in their assignments.

And ... The Ravensworth Farm Civic Association will be one of three recipients of the Park Authority's Elly Doyle Award on October 29th. This award honors individuals and groups who have made significant volunteer contributions to Fairfax County parks. Steve Reynolds will also be honored this night as an "Outstanding Volunteer."

Have you noticed.... The newly painted rails around the marina? This ambitious project was completed by Lake Accotink Park's seasonal and evening maintenance staff. The park would not be able to undertake many of its beautification projects without them.

And while you're at the marina... take a ride on Lake Accotink's tour boat. It is only \$1 per person for a 20 minute tour of the lake complete with interpretive commentary. The tour boat runs every hour on the hour. If you've taken the tour before, you will notice several new faces piloting the boat. Lake Accotink is proud that many of our new staff members have endeavored to learn the history of Lake Accotink Park and how to navigate the lake.

Announcing Lake Accotink Park's Annual



"Howl-o-ween" Dog Talent Show, Costume Contest and Boneyard Hunt

Saturday October 23

3 pm

\$4 per dog

Show off your canine companion's creative costume and talents, then hunt for treats in the "boneyard."

Call 703-569-0285 to register or for questions

Check out our exciting Halloween programs in our Calendar of Events (pages 6-7)!

Born to Be Wild- Not! Lake Accotink Park's Feral Cat Problem

Lake Accotink Park is experiencing an increase in feral cats. Whether they are abandoned pets or they are cats born feral who are being forced to find new territory for food and shelter, there is an undeniable rise. Despite several unsuccessful attempts to trap one young calico cat who frequents the shop yard at the main office, she has given birth to a litter of kittens under one of the storage units. Efforts to trap these cats will continue. If the kittens can be trapped soon enough, they may be tamed and able to be adopted. The mother, however, is most likely too old to be tamed. Instead, she will be spayed and released and be provided with food and water. Technically, the term "feral cat" refers to a cat born and raised without human contact. Sometimes, though, cats whose owners choose to no longer care for them and are abandoned outdoors may revert to feral or "wild" behaviors in an attempt to survive. It is important to remember, however, cats are domesticated, not wild creatures. They can only fend for themselves successfully under ideal circumstances which would allow them to find food and shelter and avoid dangers such as cars, dogs, other animals and abusive humans. Feral cats themselves create problems. High feral cat concentrations in some areas have decimated local small mammal and songbird populations. Feral cats are often times not spayed or neutered and breed frequently. Within a few years, two cats can produce twenty or more kittens. High feral cat concentrations can also cause greater risk of disease or starvation. Many of these cats experience a slow, excruciating death. It is a cruel cycle and needs help. Keep all cats indoors, licensed, tagged and spayed or neutered.

This feral cat is now one of several living near the main office at Lake Accotink Park.



Fall Watershed Clean-up

Help be the solution to pollution!



What: A day dedicated to cleaning up Lake Accotink Park and the Accotink Creek.

When: October 16, 9 am - 4 pm

Where: Meet at the Lake
Accotink Park marina

**Lunch will be provided for all
volunteers!**

**Please bring your own gloves and
dress for the weather. We will clean
rain or shine!**

Take a Walk on the Wild Side!

Have you met Lake Accotink Park's nightlife? If you haven't, you are missing one of Lake Accotink Park's best interpretive programs. On select Friday and Saturday nights each month, Lake Accotink Park hosts a Nature Night Hike. Limited to about ten people, the park's amateur naturalist, Axel Boy, leads guests on an evening tour along the Accotink Creek to the lake and back up the access road to the main office. This affords an opportunity to see and learn about a variety of creatures not seen during the day either because of the animals' sleeping habits or because there are too many people in the park. Many of those on the walks are repeat participants who come to experience the park during all different seasons.

Spring time walks are noted for the sleigh bell like choruses of spring peepers



A red fox- one of Lake Accotink Park's many night denizens.

(small tree frogs) calling to attract mates. The spring peepers are just one of many frogs spring hikers will see on a Night Hike. Summer hikers will be treated to the aerial shows of bats, owls and a multitude of large moths including luna moths, Polyphemus moths, and North America's largest moth, the cecropia moth. Fall hike participants may catch a glimpse of nocturnal mammals preparing for winter hibernation or hear a fox baying across

the lake as it hunts. Those who choose to brave the winter Night Hikes may see Lake Accotink Park's visiting river otters playing on the dock or hear them calling to each other as they hunt and cavort. That these shy creatures have been returning to Lake Accotink for the past several winters is proof of a slow improvement in the Potomac watershed's health. These beautiful creatures were completely gone from the area during the 1970s and 1980s.

Nature Night Hikes are an important part of Lake Accotink Park's interpretive efforts. By providing the opportunity for visitors to view wildlife in its natural habitat, it helps demonstrate the amazing biodiversity in our community and how Lake Accotink Park fits into it.

tems, and why deer are increasingly seen as problem animals both for people and for the environment. The exhibit seems to be meeting its goals. Often visitors who just stopped by for a park map will examine the case and mention their amazement at the “odd” insects they didn’t know inhabited the park or on the impressive size snapping turtles can grow to be.

Lake Accotink Park’s newest edition to its exhibit is a touch table designed and created by Steve Reynolds, a park volunteer. Touch tables are an excellent way to teach children (and adults too!) about the natural world by allowing them to examine and think about specimens themselves. Reynolds decided to undertake this project after Park manager, Tawny Hammond, took several staff members and him to visit the new redesigned mammal hall at the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum for inspiration for Lake Accotink Park’s own exhibit. He was impressed by the interactive features in the new hall and wanted to add something similar here on a smaller scale to entice children to be interested in and ask questions about the exhibit. The result of his design is a series of compartments housing specimens laid out on a table top with a map on top. Each compartment has a question and answer about the object inside and is connected with a line to the area of the park in which it was found on the park map.

ex-also



The exhibit serves

The touch table, designed and built by Steve Reynolds, includes questions and fun facts along with touchable objects from the park.

as a resource for local science teachers and Cub Scout groups many of whom bring their classes or troops to the park to learn about the environment and issues it faces. By providing the park as a local educational resource for this purpose, park staff hopes to help motivate children to care about and help protect our environment and natural resources. Night hikes, interpretive talks, visits to the main office exhibit and the touch table are all aimed to help foster some interest and respect for the natural world and the need to protect it.

Stop by to see the exhibit and the touch table. The main office and visitor’s center is open Monday through Friday from 9 am - 6 pm. Special arrangements can be made for school and scout groups and for weekends with advanced notice. Please call 703-569-0285.

- One small brown bat eats up to 3000

Fun Facts About Lake Accotink Park Wildlife

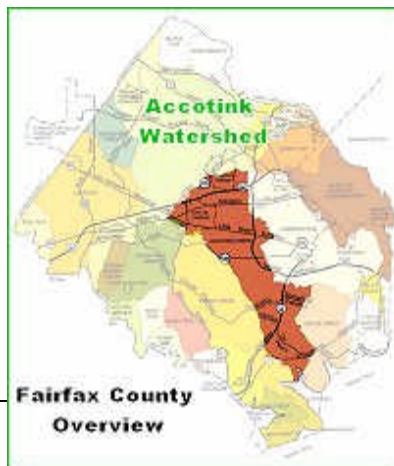
mosquitoes in an evening.

- Snapping turtles evolved over 40 million years ago and are the ancestors of about 80 percent of all turtle species alive today.
- The only poisonous snake species living in the park is the copperhead. However, these snakes are reclusive and shy and will only strike in self defense.
- Northern water snakes, which sun themselves on rocks near the dam are often mistaken for water moccasins, a species of snake which does NOT reside in the park. Northern water snakes are not poisonous.
- Beavers can either be diurnal or nocturnal depending on stresses in their environment. A beaver active during the day does not signify a rabid beaver.
- Owls can fly silently through the woods at night because their wings are built for this purpose.
- Orb weaver spiders have eight eyes arranged in two horizontal rows of four.

Thanks for Asking!

Why don't you mow the grass on Highland?

We have received many questions regarding the section of park property bordering Highland Avenue. The strip of land between Highland Avenue and the forest edge is a **riparian buffer** zone. A riparian buffer is a strip of land immediately adjacent to a stream. Adequate buffers are at least 35-feet. The vegetation, which may look scruffy and unkempt to some, is actually essential to maintaining a healthy stream system. After all, streams are the source of our drinking water. The vegetation helps filter out pollutants that wash off



lawns and roadways before they reach the stream. Plants in a riparian buffer also help to slow rain water runoff. This can help prevent stream banks from being carved out. This, in turn, reduces unsightly and dangerous erosion and keeps dirt and soil from polluting the stream and killing off stream life. We are all familiar with seeing pictures of swirling fast moving flooded streams on the news after a storm. This happens in part because of eroded stream banks from an inadequate riparian buffer zone. Riparian buffer zones also can

(Thanks for Asking continued from page 4)

provide shade for a stream. This lowers the temperature and increases the oxygen content of the water, thus enabling a greater variety of animal life to prosper.

The strip of grass on Highland Street should not be mowed because this would reduce the ability of the land to absorb and filter pollutants and to slow rainwater runoff into Accotink Creek. Grass clippings that fall into the creek can further pollute. This decomposition process releases harmful chemicals into the water. **Riparian buffer zones cannot be maintained as lawns.**

The Accotink Creek eventually runs into the Potomac River and from there into the Chesapeake Bay. By maintaining a healthy buffer here, we can not only maintain the health of our local streams and Lake Accotink Park, but the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay as well.

Accotink Creek Watershed Facts

Q: What is a watershed?

A: Every place on Earth is part of a water-

shed. A watershed is an area of land that drains into a body of water such as a lake, river, or stream. It is defined by the high points of the land that divide watersheds. Connecting the high points creates a ridgeline, much like a peak of a roof.

Rolling Road, an old colonial road used for *rolling* giant barrels of tobacco to ships in the Potomac River, runs along the ridgeline defining the southwest side of the Accotink Creek watershed. When you are out driving, walking or riding your bike, notice that you go uphill as you approach Rolling Road and downhill after you cross it.

Q: How big is a watershed?

A: Watersheds come in all sizes depending on the size of the body of water. The Accotink Creek has several smaller streams, like Flag Run and Long Branch, which feed into it. Each of these smaller streams has a watershed, which is a sub-watershed of the Potomac River watershed, which is a sub-watershed of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Watersheds are like Russian nesting dolls: a small one fits into a bigger one, which fits into a bigger one.

Q: What is a watershed address?

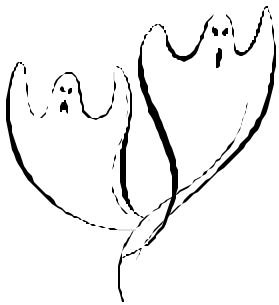
A: Your watershed address is like your home address. If you live on Flag Run Drive in the town of Springfield, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the United States, then your watershed address is Flag Run, Accotink Creek, Potomac River, Chesapeake Bay.

Q: Why are watersheds important?

A: Seventy percent of the surface of the Earth is covered with water, but only a tiny fraction of that water is fresh and available for our use. The fresh water that is stored in lakes, inland seas, and rivers accounts for only a thousandth of one percent of all the water on Earth. That water is constantly in motion. Water flows across the land and evaporates into the air where it becomes clouds. The water cycle continues when it rains again and that water flows across the land. While the water is flowing across the land in our watershed, it is available for our use. We use this water to make our lawns, gardens, and world beautiful, for swimming, fishing, boating, and reflecting sunsets, and for making the cars, newspapers,

Haunted History Cruise

Saturday, October 30th



What: Enjoy a cup of cider as you watch for glimpses of the park's nightlife along the shoreline and listen to the mysteries of Lake Accotink Park and Springfield's history aboard the tour boat.

When: Saturday October 30, 6:30 and 7:30 pm

Registration Fee : \$7 per person (ages 18 + only, please)

How to Register? : Call 703-569-0285 for Visa or MasterCard registrations or mail a check with name, address, and telephone number to 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield, VA 22150

Calendar of Events:

Advance registration is required. Please call 703-569-3464 or TTY 703-569-5200.

Sunset Cruise

Admire the sunset and relax as you cruise the beautiful shoreline of Lake Accotink.

An interpretive history of Lake Accotink park and the area included.

\$5 per participant (16+), \$4 (under 16)

Boat leaves dock at 6:30 pm

Dates: Saturday September 18 (adults only), Sunday September 19 (family cruise)



Can You Canoe? (Ages 8 years to adult)

You will learn the basic mechanics of canoeing with emphasis on safety and enjoyment. Equipment provided; bring a water bottle.

Children under 12 must be accompanied by a registered adult.

\$20 per participant

Class runs from 2-4 pm

Dates: Saturday September 18, Saturday October 9



Nature Night Hike

Join us for an evening stroll under a full moon as we try to encounter some of the “nightlife” in Lake Accotink Park.

\$5 per adult, \$3 for children under 16

Dates: Friday September 24 (ages 7+), Saturday September 25 (ages 16+) 7:30-9 pm

Friday October 29 (ages 16+), Friday November 26 (ages 7+), Saturday November 27 (ages 16+) 7:30-9 pm



Dog Day Afternoon (Humans ages 8 & up; dogs all ages)

Treat your canine companion to a special cruise aboard Lake Accotink Park’s pontoon boat.

\$5 per adults, \$4 for children 8-15 (please no children under 8); One dog per adult

Cruise runs from 2-3 pm

Dates: Sunday September 19, Saturday October 30



Specialty Events:

Labor Day Lucky Duck Mini-Golf Tournament

Great family fun! Form your own team of 2-6 people and compete from 12-6 pm in a tournament.

\$13.00 per team

Monday September 6, Noon-6 pm



Lake Accotink Park Fall Watershed Clean-Up

Be part of the solution for pollution! Lend a hand to clean up Lake Accotink and the streams that feed into it.



Lunch will be provided. Please bring your own gloves. Meet at marina rain or shine.

Saturday October 16 9 am - 4 pm

Calendar of Events (continued)

Halloween Goblin Golf

Join us for *spooktacular fun* on the Lucky Duck Miniature Golf Course. Play a round of golf with *glow in the dark golf balls*, ride the carousel surrounded by spooky music, and join in storytelling around a bonfire.



\$6 per person

Saturday October 23 6 - 9 pm

“Howl-o-ween” Dog Talent Show, Costume Contest, and Boneyard Hunt

After the costume show and talent contest, take a short walk to the tantalizing “*boneyard*” where treats are hidden for dogs to discover. All dogs must be leashed and friendly toward other dogs, children and people of all ages.

\$4 per dog

Saturday October 23 3 pm



Haunted History Cruise

Beneath the full moon, glide the moonlit waters of Lake Accotink and delve into the history and mystery of Lake Accotink Park and the local area. Enjoy a cup of cider as you catch glimpses of the night creatures that prowl the shoreline.



\$7 per participant (18+ only, please)

Saturday October 30 6:30 and 7:30 pm

Pet Pictures with Santa Claws

Bring your dog, cat or other furry friend to Lake Accotink Park for pictures with “Santa Claws.” Your pet’s special moment will be digitally captured on disk for you to keep.

\$5 per pet

Saturday December 11 Noon - 2:00 pm



Santa’s Hayride

Join Santa’s helpers on his hay wagon as they escort you on a magical nighttime ride to Santa Land! While there, tell Santa what’s on your wish list and get your picture taken too. Your souvenir digital photo will be on a disk.



\$8 per child

Saturday December 11 5 pm - 7 pm

Registration Information:

By Phone: Visa or Master Card reservations only

Please call 703-569-0285 or TTY 703-569-5200

By Mail: Send a check made payable to “FCPA” with participant’s name, address, telephone number, and program title to

7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield, Virginia 22150

Refunds: Only issued if class/program is canceled

FALL into Fun at Lake Accotink Park!

Did you know Lake Accotink Park is open on weekends from
Labor Day through October 11th?

Marina Operating Hours:

noon - 7 pm



Includes snack bar, carousel, miniature golf, and boat rentals.

Spooktacular fun at Lake Accotink Park!

Goblin Golf

Saturday October 23

6-9 pm

\$6 per child



- Play a round of golf with glow-in-the dark golf balls.
- Ride the carousel surrounded by spooky music.
- Join in storytelling around a bonfire.
- Rain date is October 30.

Fairfax County Park Authority

Lake Accotink Park



7500 Accotink Park Road
Springfield, Virginia 22150

Phone: 703-569-0285

TTY: 703-569-5200

www.lakeaccotinkpark.com

Park Management:

Tawny Hammond, Park Manager

Julie Tahan, Assistant Manager

Lee Ann Shenefiel, Operations Manager

Axel Boy, Evening Supervisor

Ed Miller, Grounds Supervisor

For FLAP comments or suggestions,
please email:

Tawny.Hammond@fairfaxcounty.gov



ADA Accommodations: Fairfax County is committed to giving all citizens equal access to recreation and leisure opportunities. In keeping with that policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations are provided to individuals with disabilities in all Park Authority programs, services, and facilities. ADA accommodations include sign interpreters, alternative information formats, program modifications and inclusion support. Contact the ADA Specialist at 703-324-8563 or (TTY) (703)803-3354 for additional information.